

Community monitoring thorough citizen's portal Jan Darpan

Crisis of COVID-19 for community monitoring

It has been realized that the pandemic changed the norms of delivery of social sector programs as well as of community led monitoring processes. The COVID appropriate behavior is going to stay longer than expected as social distancing, masking and mobility restrictions will be followed for a longer period of time. The economic stress, particularly for the informal sector workers, who are the most vulnerable, poor and deserving for accessing various scheme benefits, accelerated their migration and vulnerability. The situation of pandemic significantly reduced possibilities of face-to-face interactions within the community as well as with the concerned officials of the blocks and districts.

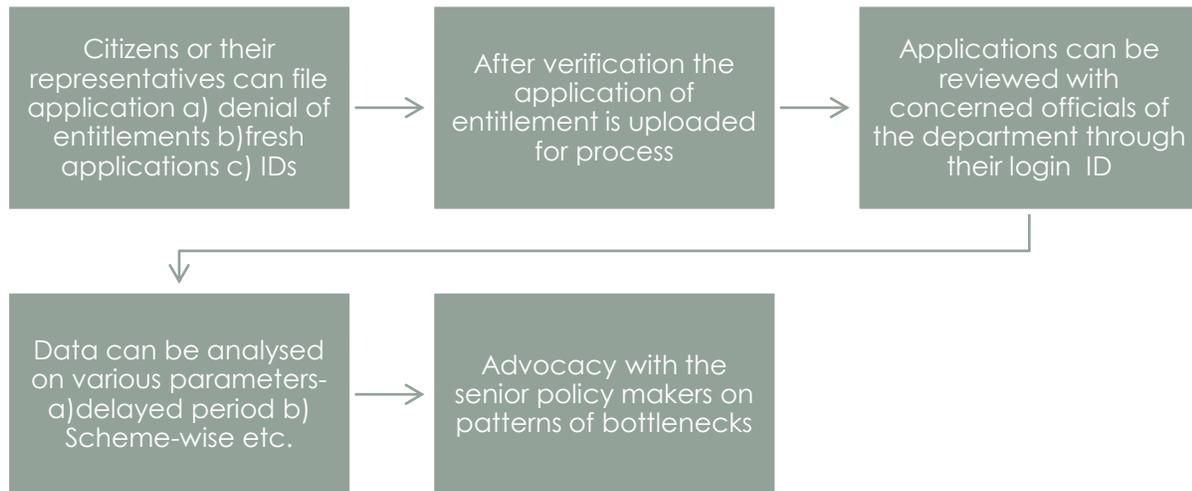
COVID-19 provided an opportunity to explore possibilities of utilizing information and application of E platforms. There are several portals of the Government programs that provide opportunity to the citizens to register their application for benefit realization. However, rural citizens find it difficult to find appropriate websites and portals to register for their grievances and applications for realizing entitlements. Unfortunately, the ultimate users i.e. citizens are not conceived in the center to enhance use and ease for the citizens.

There are several schemes having different types of portals with multiple pages and information options. A common rural citizen finds it difficult to reach out to these portal to get legitimate benefits without support from the young boys and girls.

Jan Darpan: A citizen's monitoring portal

A portal was visualized keeping the citizens in the center as a joint initiative of Samarthan and UNICEF. The power of the portal lies in the provision of bringing various schemes of the central government as well as of the state governments on a single platform. The citizens will have freedom to register their applications for delivery of various entitlements which might have been delayed or denied for several reasons- missing critical eligibility related documents i.e. Aadhar or caste certificate, incorrect information viz. wrong bank account number, age or gender or laxity of the administration viz. delay in release of installments of benefits etc. There is a need for the concerned officials to know reasons of delay or denial of benefits to various citizens with a power of the portal to sort out information by location, scheme-wise or by beneficiary detail etc.

Flow of registration and realization of benefits by the citizens through Jan Darpan



The portal provides option for registration of any citizen's feedback on denial or delay of benefit realization by self or through any of the facilitators viz. NGO representative, GP elected members, Government functionaries, SHG leaders etc. There are options of various schemes that are most common and most useful for the citizens. The entered applications are finally uploaded after verification by Samarthan's officials, checking the authenticity of the citizen and nature of feedback. The uploaded application becomes visible on the portal for any action by the government official or service provider, checking the details and information on-line. This saves the time and effort of the poor and vulnerable citizens, eagerly waiting to get benefits, to visit the block office physically with all the documents. It is found that most of the time rural citizens are either not articulate enough to explain their problem/bottleneck or go unprepared without necessary document. Therefore, they return back home disappointed. Moreover, there is always unpredictability of meeting the official at the time of their visit due to official meetings and tours etc. of the officials. The applicants have control to fill up their grievance or denial of benefit on the portal online at their doorstep that can be viewed by the officials sitting at the block or district headquarter.

The screenshot provided below shows the home page of the Jan Darpan. The options are in Hindi and portal guides applicants to easily register their application. The login button allows facilitators



and Government officials to view applications and data analytics of the registered applications. There is a top button to register applications, which is easily visible to the applicants.

The portal also provides option of analyzing information uploaded on the portal by date of registration of complaints, location of complaints, scheme-wise details, type of bottlenecks etc. This will help senior officials at the district and block level to review resolution rate as well as to identify those which got stuck due to procedural or policy constraints. This is a helpful tool not only for resolution of cases in an efficient manner but also for the policy makers to get real time feedback from the citizens on the reasons and types of denial of various benefits. There is also a button for the citizens to access information on various schemes and methods to access benefits. Moreover, videos are uploaded to help citizens navigate various portals of the schemes as well as to get various identity cards viz. Aadhar, voter card etc. using online facility.

Achievements so far:

Over the last six months after formally making portals up and running in October,2020, a large team of 700 youth of 10 districts of MP and 6 districts of Chhattisgarh having android based mobiles were trained to use the portal to file applications or feedback of the citizens in accessing benefits of the schemes. They were trained to identify type of bottlenecks to fill appropriate details. More than 5400 applications have been filed as on date.

Of the total applicants, about 39% are women applicants. The resolution could take place for 922 applications and 36 got rejected due to non-eligibility or other considerations.



Scale-up and mainstreaming plan

The citizens' portal has demonstrated utility for the citizens to register their cases of denial of various entitlements. Moreover, the youth and field workers have found the portal useful to discuss and negotiate with the concerned officials sharing data with them through on-line portal. The resolution time is getting reduced and bulk of the problem cases are being identified for corrective actions. With the existing projects of Samarthan, the use of portal is being expanded. Moreover, many of the civil society organizations have shown interest to use the portal in their project areas. With the support of UNICEF officials, Government officials are being convinced to integrate the *Jan Darpan* portal in their grievance redressal system.